

THE BELL RINGER

Montgomery Bell Academy

4001 Harding Road Nashville, TN 37205

October, 2002

Volume 59, Number 4

Congratulations! MBA Varsity Football 2002

By John Eason - Co-Editor in Chief

"I think MBA, especially, is playing well right now," McCallur Coach Ralph Foster said. "But if Brentwood Academy performs like they did [last Friday], I'm not sure anybody can beat them."

"We concur. Our pick: Brentwood Academy, 24-10." - *The Tennessean*, November 21

Nobody ever gave this team a chance. Coming into this season, the MBA community did not have high expectations for their football team. How could they? It seemed that all of the offensive line had gone off to Princeton. There were rumors that Joe Davis might have to start at right tackle. On top of that, the coach that had won three straight Clinic Bowl Championships took off for the new Eastworth High School. I guess he figured last year would be a good time to get out. After all, MBA was supposed to be a notch below wretched this season. Everyone was trying to tell this team how it was "supposed" to lose this year. I guess this team never got the message.

Prior to the postseason, many concerns and questions existed for the team. There was the loss to BGA. The soundings received from BA and Baylor. One has to remember that with two weeks left in the regular season, the playoffs, much less the Clinic Bowl, were still an uncertainty for the Big Red. But this roller coaster of a regular season gave the team the character and strength it needed in order to keep on surviving until finally that gold trophy was in their hands.

After beating Baylor at home and MUS on the road, the Big Red set up a match-up with their arch rivals, the Brentwood Academy Eagles, for "all the roses." There are many different kinds of rivalries for colleges and high schools. For MBA, I think we can all agree that Fisher Ryan is our biggest rival. When it comes to football, though, our rivalry with the Eagles is greater than any other. Why is it so fulfilling to beat this school? I could write a

novel on that question. Let's just say BA seems cocky and overconfident at all times. And yet they always lose. They give no respect to any opponent. They are "The Sports Academy." They have a tendency to "buy" some of their players. Carlton Platt is the head coach. How could BA not be a hated rival?

As soon as I walked into the stadium, I got a great reminder of why I so desperately wanted the Big Red to win this game. I looked at our side of the stands and saw hundreds of craned students jumping up and down, some with no shirts on, screaming loudly for MBA. On the other side, I see signs that say "Eagles Fly Higher", "We Want MBA", and "Go Eagles Fight Win." Is this a badminton match? Eagles Fly Higher? Maybe that helped the Eagles feel warm and fuzzy after they got thumped like a repossessed in the Clinic Bowl. These signs also proved once again that BA fans (for the football players it's a definite law) can't find a coherent sentence with a flashlight and shovel.

Let me give you a little recap of the domination that took place Friday night. BA started the game off well on their first drive by running. David Hulbert between the tackles. This first drive ended up giving the Eagles a field goal and an early 3-0 lead. MBA quietly responded. They scored 27 straight points. The first score was set up by Michael Fisher's 49-yard bomb to Brad French. Fisher then connected with Tom Santi for a 17-yard TD that gave the Big Red a 7-3 lead. When BA got the ball back, their running back, Theo Townsend, fumbled the ball and Blake Goodman recovered for MBA. Fisher quickly pounced on this opportunity as he threw an 8-yard pass to Santi, scampered for 9 yards himself, and then handed off to Blake Goodman for a six-yard touchdown. The only remarkable thing about the 14-3 MBA halftime lead was that it should have been a lot greater. BA made a goal line stand on its one-yard line that kept us out of the end zone. A touchdown was

also nullified by a questionable "chop block" call from the officials.

The second half only made things worse for the Eagles. On MBA's initial possession they drove down to BA's 28-yard line where Fisher dropped off a shuttle pass to Goodman who took off, untouched, for a touchdown. Then with three minutes to go in the third quarter, the Big Red all but sealed the deal when Fisher ran straight up the middle for a 22-yard touchdown. MBA 27, BA 3. I wanted so desperately to call *The Tennessean*. I wanted to see if I could get the writer, who predicted the 24-10 BA win, sent off to Alaska to cover the Minedog dog sled race for *The Anchorage Gazette*.

In the end, the question had to be raised as to how the Big Red could possibly pull off such an upset. Let's start with the players. To begin, let me refer you to a Carlton Platt quotation earlier in the week. He said, "I don't care who the quarterback is, if you are able to pressure him, it has an effect on the game. And if MBA doesn't get pressure on our quarterback, then they could be in trouble." I think Mr. Platt should have cared who the quarterback was, since Fisher tossed his defense for 246 yards, completing 13 of his 20 passes. Platt also seemed confident that his team would dominate on the line, between the trenches. I love it when this man gets proven wrong. On the offensive line, Jimmy Love, Wesley Langlois, Sam Garner, and Seth Cooper helped to keep the pressure minimal on Fisher, while on defense, Robert Foster, Brent Sayles, Benoit Sloan, Michael Kwan, Daniel Gluck, and defensive MVP Lewis Dawson were able to constantly harass BA's offense.

The fans were also a key to winning this game. The spirit this year has been higher than ever. I think there have been 7 school spirit days this year, more than ever before. Prior to this game, the school had a pep rally, the alumni had a tailgate at Vandy, and the seniors had their own cookout. Then everyone went into the

stadium and cheered until they had sore throats. Students I never thought held an interest in football were on their feet screaming their hearts out for the Big Red.

When I asked Mr. Gioia what a Clinic Bowl win would do for the school, he said, "I think if we win, this will confirm that we are indeed in another one of the great eras for this school. A return to what our traditions have always been about." In other words, let the Rutledge Era begin. The coaching job that was done this year was phenomenal. In the playoffs, all three teams we beat had beaten us before. The reason for this turnaround has got to begin with the coaches. They are who inspired and drove this team to victory. They are who put long hours in watching tape and scouting teams to see what changes needed to be made for the next game. Move over Ricky, it's time for a new era to begin.

What does this year's Clinic Bowl trophy symbolize? The blood, sweat, and tears that every football player put in from June to November. The two-a-days. Spring practice. Hours of watching film. Hours of practice in the cold. The sacrifice that has to be made playing football is greater than any other at this school. That is why the fans show up. That is why they cheer. This trophy needs to be placed on a different shelf than all the others. The Big Red was not expected to win this trophy. The team had no superstars and a new coach. Hard work and determination are what made MBA champions. To every player, coach, and manager, congratulations on an unbelievable year and thank you so much for this victory that I will never forget.

How did MBA turn this season around? Robert Foster, one of the hardest workers on the Big Red team, said, "For me this season was a journey with ups and downs. What really changed us from the epitome of mediocrity, at 4-4, to a champion was a definitive move to being a team with heart. Once we started playing as a team, we played together like champions." And champions they are.



"Coach Redmond took us to Vanderbilt this summer and told us that we would be here in November because we are the hardest working team in the state. We have been the hardest hitting and working team in the state and we will show BA how the hardest playing team in the state dominates." - Brent Sayles



"I think they started playing as a team, believing as a team. They started believing we could win, that it took all eleven players on each side of the ball, offense, defense, and special teams. The biggest thing, and the reason I've been so proud of this team, is we're not the biggest, the fastest, the most talented team, but we've got the biggest heart. That's what's been so fun about watching them. That's what you can't see. That's why this team is so special, because we believe that we can win. No one's given us a chance from day one. The word on the street was we're not going to be very good. But we just play the games every week as they come. And we believe we can win." - Coach Jeff Rutledge



"This year's team has never quit. Ever since our 'off week' the team has seemed to really have fun out there. The practices are up-beat and there is great energy. The main thing that has led to our turn around is the fact that several seniors have taken an ownership over the team. Our success has really become important to them. Robert Foster, Blake Goodman, Wesley Langdon, and Brent Sayles (our Captains) have developed into the type of leaders that make MBA football so special. All of the seniors have come to realize that this is 'their team', and THEY are the ones that will be identified with our success or lack of success. Once that happened, a new intensity was created." - Coach Daniel McGugin



"No one expected us to be good, but we've come together as a team on offense and defense." - Blake Goodman



"It is very exciting as a coach to have your team peak at the right time. Our success is the result of learning from our mistakes. All four losses during the regular season helped make us a better team. As a defensive coach, I really can't credit any one individual but the entire defense. Lately they have collectively played with reckless abandon and are having fun. We have worked hard for this success and still have work left to do." - Coach Jason Hiett

"Nobody thought we could do anything this year, guys. Let me tell you something. When I played professional football, and we were 7 and 7, we went to the Super Bowl and won it. We are 4 and 4 right now. We can do the same." - Coach Rutledge



"We worked hard through the summer and the season and nobody really respected us. We have been in overtimes and BA hasn't been in any. BA hasn't been challenged yet. They just expect to win and we will win because we have actually been in the tough games." - Matt Serck



"All year we have played teams with a couple of super stars. We have had eleven guys on each side of the ball that have played hard to help the team win. If we are able to do that tomorrow night we will be a winning team, because have the desire. All the years we have played teams that have been more athletic than we, but we have always played harder and meaner pound for pound and I wouldn't have it any other way tomorrow night." - Michael Kwan



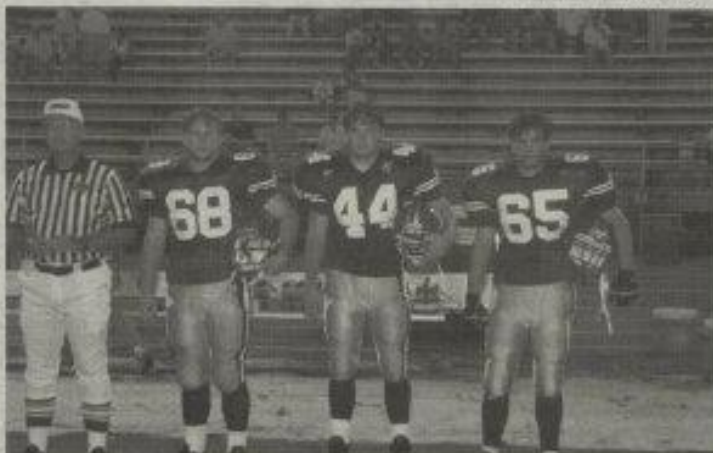
"It has been an up and down year, but we have played as a team and worked hard to get where we are." - Will Bartholomew

"We have transformed as a team throughout the season. I am excited about the Clinic Bowl." - Seth Cooper

"For me this season was journey, with ups and downs, but what really changed us from the epitome of mediocrity, at 4-4, to champions, was a definitive move to team and heart, because we were a team, and we played together like champions." - Robert Foster



"The difference over the last four games has been the increase in energy and the change in attitude and defense. The offense has been able to continue to perform well and it has all season. The defense has been flying to the ball and making plays in the four games. The keys to Friday will be playing mistake free and continuing to play hard on defense." - Matthew Jacques



"I think we have done well this year because we have played as a team, not with any superstars." - Jimmy Love



"BA doesn't have what it takes because they are not ready and we know how to fight. We have always been the underdog and when we hit rock bottom we fought our way back to the top. BA cannot handle a fight with us." - Aaron Davis

30 Years of MBA Varsity Football History

On Thursday the 21st, several MBA Alumni Varsity Football Players gathered at the Varsity Football Team's final practice of the year to support them as they were heading to the Clinic Bowl the following day.



Bill Summers ('71), Robert Harris ('75), John Eason ('79),
Reed Trickett ('74), Fred Fisher ('72)



Ben Ganshill, Sandy Henry, Lee Noel, and Jimmy Pickle,
together again, like the bitter-sweet days of the 60s that were
their own MBA Varsity Football careers

More quotations from Coaches and Players

"This year, people said we wouldn't even make the playoffs; we believed we could and we did. No one thought we could beat McCallie; we believed we could and we did. No one thought we could stop Baylor; we believed we could and we did. No one thought we would come away with a win at MUS; we believed we could and we did. No one gives us a chance against BA; we believe." - Leonard Edwards

"This has been a very special football team to be a part of. They accepted the change of head coaches in a mature manner, and I cannot remember being a part of a team that has shown so much improvement since the beginning of the season. I am especially happy for our seniors who have worked so hard. They showed up every Monday at practice ready to work, regardless of whether we had won or lost on the previous Friday. I will always remember this team as a very special group of young men." - Coach Edd Caudill

"We're playing better defense and running the ball better. (The fact that Coach Coleman and I ate at the Ryan game could have been a factor in firing us up as well.)" - Coach Todd Moran ('97)

"In trying to find the right words to come up with regarding the football team and the 2002 season, I struggle to keep it short as my coming into the program as an alumni puts a new and unfamiliar twist on a job I have done for a dozen years at other schools and other levels. None of the years have I spent in Nashville, reading only bits and pieces about the program since I left in 1983. The boys are awesome to work with. We have facilities than when I was here and more coaches. The boys take advantage of all of those things as was evident to me this summer when the team was working out together in June and July four days a week. The boys have endured a change, embraced the change, and now they are reaping the benefits of their buy in and faith in each other more than anything else. I see my own classmates in the boys each day and am very proud to be involved in the Clinic Bowl with this group. I am most impressed with the Luck Lewis's and Bennett Graham's on the team who strive each day to make the team a championship team knowing that their name may not be mentioned in the paper the next day. Their work on our special team has been exceptional all year; and their spirit is a reflection of what I find sports and, in particular, MBA football, is grounded in and built upon." - Coach Robert Black ('85)

"This team has impressed more than any other team I've ever seen. It's incredible -- where they were and where they are. The players finally bought into what we're trying to do -- and just decided that in order to win, we've got to play as a team and not as an individual." - Coach Floyd Elliott

"This is still a young team overall. They have worked very hard (for a long time), come a long way, learned, improved, persevered and deserve a lot of credit." - Coach John Vernacchi

"I feel the boys have matured throughout the season and overcome adversity to improve in the latter part of the season." - Coach Jamie Redmond

"The key to our season's turnaround was when I decided not to wash or change my lucky underwear for the rest of the season. It's gotten pretty disgusting, but I'm willing to sacrifice for the Big Red." - Coach Robert Sawyer ('98)

"It has been an interesting season. No one ever thought we would go this far. A lot of credit should be given to the guys on the field, but other people contributed to our success. The 'whites,' the JV players, did not see the game field a lot, but every time they gave it their all in practice, it made the team better." - Ben Turk

"We win as a team but alone we die." - Sam Garner

"I own everybody." - Ian Thornhill

"BA embarrassed us once and it's not going to happen again." - Lane Denson, Manager